

## **ITEM 4A**

### **Coachella Valley Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes April 9, 2026**



The audio file for this committee can be found at: <http://www.cvag.org/audio.htm>

- 1. CALL TO ORDER** – The meeting was called to order by Chair Gary Gardner, City of Desert Hot Springs Councilmember, at 10:31 a.m. in the Coachella Valley Water District, Steve Robbins Administrative Building Training Room, 75515 Hovley Lane East, Palm Desert.

A roll call was taken, and it was determined that a quorum was present:

#### **Members Present**

Mayor Pro Tem Ernesto Gutierrez  
Mayor Pro Tem Frank Figueroa  
Mayor Pro Tem Gary Gardner, *Chair*  
Director JB Hamby  
Councilmember Dana Reed  
Mayor Elaine Holmes, *Vice Chair*  
Mayor Linda Evans  
Mayor Evan Trubee  
Councilmember Ted Weill  
Councilmember Stephanie Virgen  
Mayor Pro Tem Kathleen Fitzpatrick

#### **Agency**

City of Cathedral City  
City of Coachella  
City of Desert Hot Springs  
Imperial Irrigation District\*\*  
City of Indian Wells  
City of Indio\*  
City of La Quinta  
City of Palm Desert  
City of Rancho Mirage  
Riverside County – District 1  
Riverside County – District 2

#### **Members Not Present**

Director Anthony Bianco  
Director Amber Duff  
Councilmember Grace Garner\*  
Councilmember Jan Harnik  
Supervisor V. Manuel Perez  
Councilmember Ben Guitron

Coachella Valley Water District  
Mission Springs Water District  
City of Palm Springs  
Riverside County – District 3  
Riverside County – District 4  
Riverside County – District 5

*\*arrived at Item 2*

*\*\*arrived at Item 5A*

Chair Gardner led the Commission in the Pledge of Allegiance. There were no agenda modifications and no Conflict of Interest Disclosures.

## **2. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS**

None.

## **3. COMMISSION CHAIR / DIRECTOR COMMENTS**

Executive Director Tom Kirk announced that the May 14 CVCC meeting will begin at 11 a.m. due to the Harvey Milk Breakfast in Palm Springs, which several members attend. He also

noted that the Energy & Sustainability Committee meeting scheduled for 12 p.m. on that same date is canceled and there will be no conflict with the later CVCC start time.

Mr. Kirk shared that our partners at the Mojave Desert Land Trust secured \$5.5 million from the Wildlife Conservation Board to support design work for two wildlife overcrossings on State Route 62. He also reported that the Coachella Valley Association of Governments (CVAG) and its CV Housing First program are exploring a partnership with the County of Riverside on an Encampment Resolution Funding (ERF) application aimed at bringing additional resources that would benefit conservation lands.

Lastly, Mr. Kirk noted that CVCC staff are working with the Urban Conservation Corps on a California Green Sticker Restoration grant opportunity in the Upper Mission Creek Conservation Area. More information will be provided at a later date, if the application is successful.

#### **4. CONSENT CALENDAR**

**IT WAS MOVED BY MAYOR PRO TEM FIGUEROA AND SECONDED BY MAYOR EVANS TO APPROVE THE CONSENT CALENDAR ITEMS.**

- A. Approve the minutes of the February 12, 2026, meeting**
- B. Receive and file the Local Development Mitigation Fee Annual and Five-Year Report for Fiscal Year 2024-25 in fulfillment of the reporting requirements of the Mitigation Fee Act**
- C. Receive and file a 3.9-percent inflationary adjustment to the Local Development Mitigation Fee for fiscal year 2026-27, to take effect July 1, 2026**
- D. Authorize the Executive Director to execute Amendment No. 2 to the contract with Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy to continue to provide services as CVCC's land acquisition manager, extending the contract through June 30, 2027 with an additional not-to-exceed amount of \$91,334**

**THE MOTION CARRIED WITH 10 AYES AND 7 MEMBERS ABSENT**

|                                           |               |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Mayor Pro Tem Ernesto Gutierrez</b>    | <b>Aye</b>    |
| <b>Mayor Pro Tem Frank Figueroa</b>       | <b>Aye</b>    |
| <b>Director Anthony Bianco</b>            | <b>Absent</b> |
| <b>Mayor Pro Tem Gary Gardner</b>         | <b>Aye</b>    |
| <b>Director Alex Cardenas</b>             | <b>Absent</b> |
| <b>Councilmember Dana Reed</b>            | <b>Aye</b>    |
| <b>Mayor Elaine Holmes</b>                | <b>Aye</b>    |
| <b>Mayor Linda Evans</b>                  | <b>Aye</b>    |
| <b>Director Amber Duff</b>                | <b>Absent</b> |
| <b>Mayor Evan Trubee</b>                  | <b>Aye</b>    |
| <b>Councilmember Grace Garner</b>         | <b>Absent</b> |
| <b>Councilmember Ted Weill</b>            | <b>Aye</b>    |
| <b>Councilmember Stephanie Virgen</b>     | <b>Aye</b>    |
| <b>Mayor Pro Tem Kathleen Fitzpatrick</b> | <b>Aye</b>    |

Councilmember Jan Harnik  
Supervisor V. Manuel Perez  
Councilmember Ben Guitron

Absent  
Absent  
Absent

#### **4.1 ITEMS HELD OVER FROM CONSENT CALENDAR**

None

### **5. DISCUSSION / ACTION**

#### **A. 2025 Annual Report**

Conservation Program Manager Peter Satin presented the staff report highlighting a summary of the actions taken over the course of 2025.

Brief member discussion ensued with Mr. Satin answering questions from the Commission regarding list of current properties being sought out for acquisition.

The item was received and filed without a vote from the Commission.

#### **B. Acquisition of three parcels in the Mecca Hills/Orocofia Mountains Conservation Area**

Chair Gardner welcomed, Elizabeth King, Executive Director of Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy (CVMC), to present the staff report, and acknowledged CVMC Chair Deborah McGarrey and Vice Chair Rita Lamb, who were also in the attendance. Ms. King presented the staff report.

Member discussion followed, during which Ms. King responded to questions from the Commission regarding trail accessibility from the parcel.

Members also inquired about providing the names of the sellers for all acquisitions to ensure no conflicts of interest for Commissioners. Mr. Kirk recommended the acquisition could be conditioned on a follow up related to seller information and, if a conflict is identified, the item will be re-agendized for a future meeting.  
recommended including a condition A revised motion was made to include the approval of the item would be conditional

**IT WAS MOVED BY MAYOR EVANS AND SECONDED BY MAYOR TRUBEE TO APPROVE THE REVISED MOTION TO RESOLUTION 2026-03 FOR ACQUISITION OF THREE PARCELS CONSISTING OF APPROXIMATELY 140.75+/- ACRES IN THE MECCA HILLS/ OROCOPIA MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION AREA AT A COST NOT TO EXCEED \$63,000 PLUS CLOSING AND TRANSACTION RELATED COSTS NOT TO EXCEED \$2,500; AND AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE ALL NECESSARY CONTRACTS AND TAKE SUCH OTHER ACTIONS AS NECESSARY FOR THE ACQUISITION; CONDITIONED ON 24-HOUR GRACE PERIOD TO ALLOW STAFF TIME TO PROVIDE THE SELLER INFORMATION AND DETERMINE WHETHER ANY CONFLICTS OF INTEREST EXIST**

**THE MOTION CARRIED WITH 11 AYES AND 6 MEMBERS ABSENT**

|                                    |         |
|------------------------------------|---------|
| Mayor Pro Tem Ernesto Gutierrez    | Aye     |
| Mayor Pro Tem Frank Figueroa       | Aye     |
| Director Anthony Bianco            | Absent  |
| Mayor Pro Tem Gary Gardner         | Aye     |
| Director JB Hamby                  | Present |
| Councilmember Dana Reed            | Aye     |
| Mayor Elaine Holmes                | Aye     |
| Mayor Linda Evans                  | Aye     |
| Director Amber Duff                | Absent  |
| Mayor Evan Trubee                  | Aye     |
| Councilmember Grace Garner         | Absent  |
| Councilmember Ted Weill            | Aye     |
| Councilmember Stephanie Virgen     | Aye     |
| Mayor Pro Tem Kathleen Fitzpatrick | Aye     |
| Councilmember Jan Harnik           | Absent  |
| Supervisor V. Manuel Perez         | Absent  |
| Councilmember Ben Guitron          | Absent  |

### **C. Acquisition of one parcel in the Willow Hole Conservation Area**

Ms. King presented the staff report.

Member discussion ensued with Ms. King responding to questions from the Commission regarding the need for fencing on the property due to its location near Varner Road and the potential for illegal dumping. Commissioners again inquired about the names of the sellers to ensure no conflicts of interest for Commissioners.

**IT WAS MOVED BY MAYOR EVANS AND SECONDED BY MAYOR HOLMES TO APPROVE RESOLUTION 2026-04 FOR ACQUISITION OF ONE PARCEL CONSISTING OF APPROXIMATELY 9.23+/- ACRES IN THE WILLOW HOLE CONSERVATION AREA AT A COST NOT TO EXCEED \$70,000 PLUS CLOSING AND TRANSACTION RELATED COSTS NOT TO EXCEED \$1,450; AND AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE ALL NECESSARY CONTRACTS AND TAKE SUCH OTHER ACTIONS AS NECESSARY FOR THE ACQUISITION; CONDITIONED ON 24-HOUR GRACE PERIOD TO ALLOW STAFF TIME TO PROVIDE THE SELLER INFORMATION AND DETERMINE WHETHER ANY CONFLICTS OF INTEREST EXIST**

**THE MOTION CARRIED WITH 11 AYES AND 6 MEMBERS ABSENT**

|                                 |         |
|---------------------------------|---------|
| Mayor Pro Tem Ernesto Gutierrez | Aye     |
| Mayor Pro Tem Frank Figueroa    | Aye     |
| Director Anthony Bianco         | Absent  |
| Mayor Pro Tem Gary Gardner      | Aye     |
| Director JB Hamby               | Present |
| Councilmember Dana Reed         | Aye     |
| Mayor Elaine Holmes             | Aye     |
| Mayor Linda Evans               | Aye     |
| Director Amber Duff             | Absent  |

|                                           |               |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Mayor Evan Trubee</b>                  | <b>Aye</b>    |
| <b>Councilmember Grace Garner</b>         | <b>Absent</b> |
| <b>Councilmember Ted Weill</b>            | <b>Aye</b>    |
| <b>Councilmember Stephanie Virgen</b>     | <b>Aye</b>    |
| <b>Mayor Pro Tem Kathleen Fitzpatrick</b> | <b>Aye</b>    |
| <b>Councilmember Jan Harnik</b>           | <b>Absent</b> |
| <b>Supervisor V. Manuel Perez</b>         | <b>Absent</b> |
| <b>Councilmember Ben Guitron</b>          | <b>Absent</b> |

#### **D. Acquisition of one parcel in the Willow Hole Conservation Area**

Director of Conservation Kathleen Brundige provided the Commissioners with an update regarding the burrowing owl and permitting situation the CVCC has been working on since late 2025.

Member discussion ensued with Ms. Brundige answering questions from the Commission regarding the information presented.

Brian Croft, US Fish and Wildlife Service's Field Supervisor for the Palm Springs and Southern Nevada field office, made brief remarks stating the Agency's main goal is figuring out how to move forward and ensure the plan works for jurisdictions from a permitting standpoint and also works for the conservation goals and objectives in the plan.

No action was taken as this was an informational item only.

### **6. INFORMATION**

- A. Attendance Record**
- B. Contracts under Executive Director's signing authority**
- C. Acquisition Status Report**
- D. CVCC's Quarterly Investment Report through December 31, 2025**
- E. CVCC's Unaudited Financial Reports through December 31, 2025**

### **7. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS**

Michael Harrington, a resident of Rancho Mirage requested greater transparency regarding issues currently facing CVCC, including seeking a copy of the letter from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concerning the Burrowing Owl.

### **8. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The next **Coachella Valley Conservation Commission** meeting will be held on Thursday, May 14, at 11 a.m. at the Coachella Valley Water District, Steve Robbins Administration Building Training Room, 75515 Hovley Lane East, Palm Desert, 92260.

**12. ADJOURN**

Chair Gardner adjourned the meeting at 11:34 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
*Elysia Regalado, Deputy Clerk*